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Perceptive Treasures

When first
I
met
you,
you were as the
sea --
one vast,
seemingly unvarying
region.
But then,
little by little,
your laughter,
your touch,
your smiles,
your words,
and actions
gradually revealed
that you were
complex,
brilliantly faceted
as a diamond,
deep as the ocean,
secretive as the treasures in the depths,
warm as its salt waters,
and vivid as its sunsets.
Be as the ocean.
Remain the same.
Cradle me softly as the waters envelope the shells.
Carry me along in the tide of your life
Until,
Like the ocean you tire of me forever as a shell
Left tenderly by the sea
On the Sands of Lonely Time.

R. R.



Love eyes and love sighs
were made for
Cold winter nights
under warm blankets
together.

J. D. Whitfield, Jr.

Answer His Call

While standing here staring out to sea,
I wonder why God gave all this to me?
The wind, the trees, the beautiful blue sky,
it's much too much, for such as I!
He gave me a wife to cherish and love,
and a little girl Angel from Heaven above,
and I'm very humble in this world below,
to know that He can love us so. . .
Even though we sink into the depths of Sin,
He will open His Gates and allow us in,
if only we confess that God is All,
Heed our hearts, answer His call!
Why are hearts filled with hate?
Not turned to love until it's too late?
Why do we sin, day after day?
and away from His pathway tend to stray?
I watch the clouds as they float by,
and know that God is in Heaven on high,
looking through those clouds and into my heart,
and of the world, I'm a VERY small part. . .
But He see's us all, and is by our side,
There is no use to run, and try to hide,
from His loving eyes, that see, and know all,
Heed His cry! Answer His call!
Wouldn't it be wonderful to live always?
Not go through life in a constant daze?
Wouldn't it be wonderful to live with God?
Even though still, the earth you tread?
Always walk away from sin?
Not yield to Temptation, never give in?
YOU can do it, if you give your all,
And heed His Cry! Answer His Call!

(Behold, I Stand at the door and knock)

Virgil Carico

Contemplation

I'm thankful for life's mountains, Lord,
Up where I feel the sun.
I'm thankful for the valleys, too
Where the mists are darkly spun.

It's in the valley, Lord,
I draw most close to You.
It's in the valley, Lord,
I really need your strength --
I cannot trust my own.

I lean upon your arm, Lord
And you gently lead me on.

Then soon we're on the mountain top
Together, You and I --
And oh, what joy it is to know
That You're still standing by.

For I know there'll be more valleys, Lord,
That I must travel through,
But I'll not fear -- because I know
Dear Lord, You'll be there, too.

It's lovely on the mountain top,
With blessings overflowing,
But it's when I'm in the valley, Lord,
I really feel your love.

Vermelle MacLane

IT'S BEEN A LONG ROAD

It's been a long road — for the both of us.

I remember when he first started evening school. It was kind of a joke in a way; but he got more serious as he began to meet other people like himself.

When I married him in 1968, he was a college drop-out and making just over 110 dollars a week. Our income didn't rise very fast, so I went to work soon after our second year of marriage had begun. I think it was after his high school class re-union that he got the idea of completing his degree. He said he would "just try it to see what night school was all about." He met many adults like himself — some younger, some older — who were doing what he was doing. They too realized that income rose with education. Bob and his new friends had a lot in common.

The life of a wife can be lonely. Especially so when the husband goes to school two nights a week and spends most of his weekend studying accounting or religion. I remember one course in particular; when he sat up night after night reading for hours. I would have liked him with me — instead of the books. College was important to him and to me, too.

After a couple of years of going to sleep by myself three and four nights a week did I realize the sacrifice that Bobby was making for us. The few weeks between semesters always were our greatest times — being together, Dining out, going to movies, seeing friends — all lasted for only a few weeks and then back to class.

He graduates in December. I've waited. He's waited. We've sacrificed; but he's almost finished. It's been a long road, and I'm a proud wife.

Patricia Mouldin

Deep in the cypress swamp, Black murky water
Lurked around dark knarled roots. Slimy bark
And rotting wood held the roots of the gray
And black moss. Fungus grew in the trees and
In the muck and slime. A stagnate odor hung
In the black air.

No sun shined in this dismal caldron
For overhead were always black lumpy
Clouds dropping black dew to the snarled
Rotting branches below.

There was no land, for all was muck and
Slime. There was no green -- only black was
Painted there. Nothing grew in this stagnate
Hell. Forever black was past and future too.

Then one day a rotting branch crashed to the
Mire, making an opening through the black air
From tree top to bottom. A ray of sun jumped
Through the clouds and pierced the black.

The beam of light struck a protruding root and
Shone there like a beam of hope.
Day after day the light shone through 'til finally
One day a small twist of green popped forth. A
Seed, planted perhaps by God Himself, began to grow.
Slowly it grew 'til it raised its head above the
Ground. And there it lived amidst its tomb of black.

Then one day a bud was there, swelling within its
Secret to show. Then unleashing the beauty there, the
Purple throat and pure white arms were the only blemish
To this land of black.

There it grows among black and gloom, life among death.
But there it lives, unloved, doomed to die and join the
black despair of all the rest.

John D. Whitfield, Jr.

SHORT STORY

It seemed as if he had been walking for hours and still he had no idea how to get out of this rain-drenched forest. His clothes were completely soaked from the misty, fine rain that seemed to hang in mid-air refusing to fall. The wet clothes rubbed rough against his skin as he walked but he was not aware of any discomfort. The heavy earthy smell of the forest humus was almost overpowering.

The trees were tall and so thick he was unable to determine whether it was night or day, but it really did not matter. The only thing that did matter was getting out of this forest!

In the dim light he saw only one path to take, it was small and almost hidden by the dense undergrowth. The path was well-traveled or seemed so because of its worn down pattern.

Water and mud filled the path and as he walked he felt the cold, muddy water oozing into his shoes. A fleeing thought came to him to turn back and go across the forest and avoid the path but he clung stubbornly to the path and kept going.

"Surely it will lead to a road or even a farmhouse," he thought.

He had been following the path for over an hour when a small light loomed in to view just ahead. His heart leaped. At first he thought the light was shining from a house, but then he realized that the light was moving. But was it coming closer or going away? Even with his eyes that had become accustomed to the dark he could not tell in which direction the light was going, but he could tell that it was slowly moving.

Questions flooded his mind. Why would anybody else be out in this kind of weather? Of course it could be a hunter or maybe a moonshiner or even a farmer out looking for a lost cow.

Why should he care who they were or why they were out here? All he wanted was to get out of this "wet hell."

He watched the light moving slowly away from him and almost disappear deeper into the darkness of the forest. He began to yell and shout with all his strength for it to stop.

The light disappeared completely and he panicked. Small wet branches slapped in his face and his feet struggled for footings in the mud and undergrowth, as he hurried toward the place where the light had suddenly disappeared.

The contour of the land changed abruptly and its downward slope increased his speed. He tried to check his descent but it was too late. A large oak tree appeared before him--he shifted his weight to miss the tree but his chest hit the tree with a "whump", knocking the wind from him--he lost his balance and fell forward. The dirt ground into his wet flesh as he rolled down the hillside.

Nothing he did seemed to slow him down; he grasped at trees and roots as he fell, but it was no use. The earth underneath was sliding down the hill with him.

At last the world stopped and he lay still, panting for breath. He felt no pain; his body felt only the coldness of the night.

The silence of the night was suddenly broken by the most horrible sounds he had ever heard. The creatures of the forest were all screaming out in high-pitched shrieks and he could tell by their sounds that they were all fleeing from the area where he was lying. Had his fall frightened them or was there something else that had made them flee in terror?

He could feel panic gripping him, paralyzing him momentarily. His brain began to reject the messages that the senses were sending. He closed his eyes and wrapped his arms around his head and lay still, just as he had done as a frightened child in the dark.

Reason began to creep back into his brain and he realized that he would have to get up and try if he was to get out of this horror.

With renewed confidence, he opened his eyes and started through the forest; half walking, half stumbling.

Suddenly the light appeared again only a few feet ahead. He stopped, then began to move cautiously toward the light. It was a monk! He could plainly see the gray cloak, and the hood that covered the head.

As he came closer he could see that the form had its back to him and that the light was coming from under the long cloak. He realized that he was standing on the edge of a graveyard and the ghostly being was standing before three graves. Two of the three were filled and grass was growing over the top, the other was freshly dug and open.

As he came nearer the stranger did not speak and continued to gaze into the open grave. He inched closer pulled toward the scene as a moth toward a flame. The grave was empty except for water standing in the bottom. At the head of each of the three graves were three tombstones and written on each stone he read HIS NAME!

Terror gripped his heart and his breath came in short choked gasps; he felt as though he could scream out his lungs; but he must find out why. Why is my name on those tombstones?? Why? The illuminated form turned to face him, under the hood was only a skull!!! It spoke with a hollow, whispering voice, "In the first grave is buried your morals; in the second your soul; and in the third your body will soon lie."

"Why? Why? How did my soul and morals die?", he asked in a strangled voice. It looked at him with hollow eyes and told him that they had been buried for a long time. His morals had been destroyed by his lying, his cheating, his stealing. His soul destroyed by his breaking all the laws of God and rejecting God.

He fell to the ground crying and begging for his life. The strange form laughed a screaming laugh as it said, "You fool, you did not cry and beg when your morals and soul were buried, but you cry and beg to let this pile of decaying flesh continue to live a worthless life! NEVER!!"

Patricia G. Mauldin

The rhyming
and timing
of the
words of wit
I writ

Make the message
a mistakage
when I might
try to write
A little thought in verse.

A metaphor would
be nice,
And so would
a similitude.

I'd even use onomatopoeia
in my poem,
If I could make it fit
into what I write.

But no matter what you say,
whether now or yesterday,
what you write
must be right
To keep the buzzards on their toes
And off
the back
of your dying prose.

I've heard it said
by the scholarly sort
That poems of love
are out.
But I believe that
what they say
is only true for
them.
As for me I'll say
what my heart dictates
And that is love
and poems
are vogue
to date
for me and
my little bird
of loveliness.
Tweet. Tweet.

John D. Whitfield, Jr.

. . . Donna

incline.
i beg you, to me
the ear within
the universe
behind your eyes --
be the morror
for the carrousel of
my dreams
and the kaleidoscope of
my mind --
i only
write the words
but you
create
the poems.

i
can't say that it's
me sitting next
to you singing
in a small
still voice
because that would be admitting
they say and admitting's not permitted
in this world
and i couldn't even tell you what
i said because that
would be admitting what isn't permitted
and admitting what isn't permitted
would permit what isn't admitted
and
that isn't permitted
at least they say not around here.

T. J.

Perfect Imperfection

Pause.
Remember.
Imagine
all the shells we've left behind on the sands of beaches we've
combed.
Why?
Could it be that we
pass them by
because they remind us of
ourselves?
There comes a time in each of our lives when we
realize that we have our own
faults,
our own
flaws.
Some people
reject us because of these flaws;
other people
love in spite of them.
Unrelentless Time
washes over and around us like the
ocean, bubbling over the self-shells.
Subsonsciously,
we collect the shells most nearly perfect --
representations of our hopes, dreams and
self-aspirations,
rarely reached,
rarely discovered.
Pause.
Ponder.
What kind of shells will you comb the beach for
next time?

R. R.

Recipe for Love

When He created me,
He included in my heart
All the components of Love.
So many things he put there,
As if they were ingredients in a complex recipe:
Understanding,
Compassion,
Patience,
Tenderness,
Insight,
Friendship,
Generosity,
And all the other little words,
That when woven together and put into action,
Compose a warm, secure blanket of love to wrap around those
I bestow it upon.
And then I met you,
And I took a little bit of this
And a lot of that.
Blended it with a spoon called "us"
And created a rare,
unique
blend of love to share with you
that no one else could ever possess.
We liked the spoon,
testing the bitter-sweetness
of love
and knew there was a mere letter's difference between
living
and
loving.

R. R.

ESCAPE

Escaping, darting haplessly into a forest of tall pines and shadowy oaks. A week-end free, nothing to do but breathe and live. Not a time for buying four-dollar drinks for two-dollar ladies, but a time for enjoying the out of doors and ignoring the norm. There's so much beauty in the green of things. Sunlight glistens, adding movement to the forest floor. Tiny creatures scamper in our path. A sleek reptile overtakes his prey and soft breezes treat us to pleasant smells of sap and nectar. A meandering stream invites us to join it, cool, clear water flowing lazily over gray brown rocks.

So it was — a fantastic day — there for our enjoyment. We were taking advantage of the boundless fascination this day offered. Bud seemed quite taken with our surroundings. I hoped these Carolina lowlands measured up to my stories of them. He said nothing, but his dark eyes smiled. Words weren't necessary to say he liked what he saw. I had expected that of Bud. He was one of those strange, wonderful people who spot the good in everything.

We stopped to rest on the stream's bank, our bared feet swimming in the cool water. Relaxing, reflecting, asking nothing but to view the day and enjoy nature's gifts. We'd slept late and kissed pretty faces good-bye. It was nice. The sun sneaked behind a cloud, shading our momentary utopia. Happiness and peace were suddenly within our grasp, on a quiet, cool, shaded bank away from it all.

Time had stopped, but our journey still lay before us. Picking up the packs, we set out once again for the old log cabin I'd known years before. Looking up, I noticed the many dark, threatening clouds that were invading the blue skies. It was obvious there'd be a storm. Unconsciously I quickened my pace. A small ache hit my left ankle and the little pack on my back seemed to gain weight. I glanced around at Bud. He was calm. His smile was reassuring. I felt perhaps we'd reach the cabin before the storm broke. The path became more narrow, the shadows larger. The ache in my ankle told me to stop and rest, but by this time, the sun had surrendered to the menacing clouds. Lying to Bud, I said we were almost there, not really knowing how easy it would be to spot the old cabin in the halfnight. The evening said hello. And we were alone.

Suddenly, the clouds shouted their anger. Lightning streaked across the blackening ceiling. The storm was upon us. Animals snuggled into their homes to wait out the rain. Frightening noises jumped at us from all sides. Then the cloud bottoms dropped open, letting cold water drench us. The wind ripped into our faces.

Finally, there it stood — an old decrepit cabin, much smaller than I had remembered. It looked great to me despite its broken windows and webbed-covered entrance. I jumped onto the porch, carefully avoiding the rotting steps. With one shove, the old door screeched open. Once inside, I dropped the wet pack and slipped to the floor. Bud! Where was he? I ran to the door, only to find him standing just off the porch, letting the rain-water bathe him. His black hair dripped across his forehead. Our eyes met. We smiled.

The storm was relentless. The heavens unleashed their fountains, drowning the earth below. Darkness swallowed everything. Winds shrieked and ravaged small trees and shrubs, whipping through the cabin, attempting to put out our lanterns. Night had arrived. Our situation was obvious. Resigned to our peril, Bud and I began preparations for spending the night in our damp hiding place. Using a few logs and some broken chairs, he built a fire in the old fireplace.

Outstretched on the splintery floor, we finished our few provisions and talked of places we'd been and people we'd known. Soon the conversation dwindled and Bud dozed off. Warmth filled the tiny room. The wind had lessened, but the downpour raged on. Looking around, I wondered if I should douse the fire, but the flames caught my eyes and let my mind regress the last time I'd spent a night in that cabin. It had been many years before, in high school. Who was with me? Oh yes, now I remember – Wally, Bill and Lee. We were out adventuring. Strange, I never thought about it before that night. Lee and Bill were killed in an auto accident just after graduation. And Wally was still missing in action in Nam. Sad. They were great guys, and so young.

I was asleep, perfectly relaxed. I slept deeply. But I could not have slept long. I awoke to an enormous crackling sound. My eyes felt the heat before they saw the flames. Our harmless little fire had been carried to every wall by the raging winds. The cabin had become a roaring inferno, capturing us in its grasp. Turning frantically to Bud, I found him lying back on his elbows, smiling. "What are we gonna do?" His eyes reflected the bright flames. The evil in his expression pierced me. His reply to this day echoes in my memory. "Die." The ceiling fell.

Michael Green

I love soft caresses
and gentle kisses
from my misses
by the
fire
at
home.

I love red wine
and summer time
and what's mine
that's
her's
for
me.

I love wet lips
her wrinkled slips
and shapely hips
pressed
close
to me
at
night.

I love her sighs
and eyes
and thighs
all filled
with
love
for
me.

John D. Whitfield, Jr.

Like the first tender blossom,
after winter frosts
and spring rains
and sunny days
has turned to juicy fruit
ready for gathering,
You, my Tenderness, are ripe for Love.

Love Night

It was the night that we heard the
wolf howling in the distance.
It was cold and the wind was blowing.
The moon was hidden by big, black
Moving clouds. There were no stars.
We walked along where the creek bed
was filled with dead leaves.
We stopped by the big stump and you
kneeled by the big, ugly roots
Protruding from the soil.
You looked up into my eyes and said
the first words of the night.
You vowed your eternal love for me.
You reached over and ran your fingers
over my smile stopping at my cheek.
You then reached up with both hands and
placed your palms on my cheeks.
You pulled me down 'til our eyes were in
the union that our lips and hearts were
Soon to be.

Many times I've walked this lonely strand
Just at dawn in the salty mist, as the
Midnight breeze is gently dying – and
The day is being born before my eyes. The
Cool sand beneath my feet warms my heart.
A lonely gull reigns over his blue-green forest.
The king of the tidal pool scurries along,
The fluffy white sand, a pew of shells,
Sand, as the gray of a storm,
Then the endless, eternal meadow of blue and green,
All emulating a world of peace.

Carolina Again

Being in Carolina brings many thoughts to mind.
I think of youth and all the dreams behind.
I spent my boyhood among these hills.
And even now I remember how it feels
To be a part of the land I love,
Where I see and hear the bluebird and turtledove.
I remember little animals running in the trees;
I remember playing and crawling on my knees,
I found much pleasure in those early days,
And now I can see through the haze
That once again, I am a child,
In Carolina, running wild.

John D. Whitfield, Jr.

. . .Dale

the ant
and
i talked for
hours underneath
the
morning-fire red maple leaf
where i first met
him and
solved (as we have so
often since)
the problems
of the World
and remembered
times
we've had together
and
when i mentioned you,
he said, "nice enough,"
but declared that
though you have
three measurements,
the third is
not large enough

and you
only have two arms
and two legs (instead of,
he remarked in
an uncharacteristically candid
appraisal,
the six he
finds so
attractive
in the females
of
his line) and
no antennae – which
unfortunate
oversight by the
Creator
he pitied you for –
but as
human beings
go,
he agreed
you'll do, at least
until such time
as he converts me

and i become
an ant.

T. J.

That Special Love

I loved.

The most beautiful love there
ever has been upon
this most abominable earth.

I smiled.

My life was so full of the rays
of sunshine that I could
not keep it back.
The whole world seemed to smile.

I felt,

A feeling so rich with all the
wonderful things that I once
thought would never be mine.

I saw

This miserable world in a new
light, it was now overflowing
with beauty and good.

I laughed.

My happiness was so bountiful
that I had to share it with
those around me.

I grasped,

Clung to that love that made
such a tremendous change
in my existence.

I lost,

Lost the one thing that was
more important to me than
my own insignificant self.

I grieved

Over the loss that I thought
I would never be able to
forget or regain.

I will love again.

Somewhere, somehow, I will
regain that love that once
was my source of being.

Suppose

Bombarded by many thoughts, enjoying the time at hand;
Prismed gladness succumbs to itself.
A ray of 'glittering sunshine is in accord with nature
on the hills and flowing streams.
Walk straight and tall and becoming of today;
To wait is to go behind and shield yourself for the inevitable.

Success Or Not

Utterly destroyed is the one that is alive,
Constant success spurs men to decay.
Defeat secures for them the right to know that it can be done.
So if you are alive, do not always play
The victory song or clang all the bells
The hard gravel road is the one.

Andy Atwell

To whom it may concern (if, when and wherever I happen to find her).
...and you,

Gentle Reader
are the
personification
of every nymphette
I have ever
chased
across the green fields
of my imagination
and every flower
Ferdinand the Bull
has ever
sniffed.

turning
and
not finding
you there
leaves me
wondering and
wandering - -
like these words,
i find
you've become
the parentheses
around my
life.

T. J.

A MEANING FOR LIFE

She had been awakened this morning in much the similar fashion to which she had become accustomed over a period of three months, through they seemed more like three years. This morning was somewhat different though. It was Christmas Day and the rain was pounding so heavily against her window that she could barely see the world outside. She wondered why it had to be raining today for it would spoil the plans of so many children, but then she remembered she had a questioning nature. She knew she had often taken everything for granted, obliviously accepting even the rising and setting of the sun as some kind of right to which she was entitled. Rain was a free gift to the earth, just as the spring and fall, the sea and sky, so why not recognize it as such. She relaxed and felt satisfied with herself for becoming somewhat perceptive. . .hoping this quality would stay with her.

Christmas Day was truly for children, she thought. . .those we have and those we have been ourselves. She was reminiscent of Christmas Days logged neatly away in her mind. . .the holly, candles and snow. . .the gifts under the tree. . .the first Christmas with Kevin and Lisa and Jim. Christmas was a certainty. . .something to count on. It was a Day that had and always would endure. Children seek these certainties, she thought, but so do adults. Each enjoys the comfort of the assurances in life.

"Mrs. Brandon. . .may I come in?" The familiar voice and knock at the door brought her back to reality. . .a reality she wasn't sure she wanted to return to.

"Yes. . .come in."

"Merry Christmas, Mrs. Brandon. . .can you believe this rain? The weatherman promised us 6 inches of snow and instead we get rain. . .some luck!" Miss Lang, the youngest nurse on the floor, had a way of picking out the worst of any situation and personifying it.

"Merry Christmas, Miss Lang. I know the rain had disappointed quite a few children who won't be able to experiment with their toys outdoors but perhaps it won't last all day." She thought of the irony of this situation. . .the patient trying to make the nurse optimistic. . .this was quite a turn around. She couldn't be critical though for she, too, had dwelled on trivialities until quite recently.

"Turn over on your right today. . .this left side looks pretty bad." She proceeded with the injection as if she were oblivious to procedure.

"Have you heard from your husband today. . .are the children coming?"

"Yes, Jim called early this morning. He said Kevin and Lisa were up at the crack of day and hardly had eyes big enough to see all their treasures. Their grandparents are there so I am sure they are pretty content. We wanted them to be as happy as possible with my being away." Suddenly that word "away" struck a hard tone with her. . .she didn't want to face the dismal reality of its meaning. She didn't want to stop believing, she preferred to stay innocent. Just as children don't want to stop believing in Santa Claus. . .she didn't want to stop believing in life. She had always felt that you couldn't stop believing without suffering a loss and sometimes the burden of this knowledge would be too heavy to bear.

"Some of the girls here have a caroling hay ride planned for this evening" Miss Lang broke in on her thoughts, "sure hope this rain leaves so we can go through with it. My fiancé is supposed to meet me at 2:00. . .have you ever met him?"

"No, but I have heard you speak of him often." She knew it best not to probe any further into this conversation. . .youth and the promises of love and life were subjects not to be discussed today.

"Guess you had better get on with your patients if you plan to get out of here by 2:00. . . thanks and have a Merry Christmas." She hoped this would dispel any further communication. . . she just didn't feel like talking.

"Merry Christmas to you, Mrs. Brandon. I'm sure you'll miss being home with your family today but there's next year to look forward to. . .see you tomorrow." The thud of the door as she departed was simultaneous with a loud burst of thunder. . .her thoughts were again of memories. The bare branched trees outside bent to the rising wind. Something about wind and rain always makes one melancholy, she thought. She remembered the kids, ages 5 and 3 now. . .it was unbelievable that time could pass so rapidly. She and Jim had been married 9 years before the arrival of the first. . .Kevin. . .and he was surely brought to them by the good will of God. She and Jim just hadn't been able to have any children and had consulted the advice of their minister. "Why don't you and Jim consider adoption", he asked, "this sometimes has a way of alleviating the pressures which may very well be preventing your pregnancy. . .but most importantly, it will fill the void in your lives in your need to share your love and your relationship with a child." After many long months of waiting and tedious procedures she and Jim picked Kevin up from the hospital. Ironically, he was born two days before Christmas and they brought him home on Christmas Day. She compared that day to this one. . .she remembered how when holding him to her face she felt the tenderness and protective cherishing in the birth of a child and sensed immediately that babies thrive on love. . .something that she and Jim could give abundantly. Watching Kevin grow properly enhanced her belief in innocent faith, in goodness, in love, and in the certainties of life. . .even in the certainty of Santa Claus! He was but 17 months old when she quite unexpectedly became pregnant. She recalled Jim's blank expression when she first confronted him. . . "Dr. Jennings says I am 6 weeks pregnant," she had said. . . "I can't believe it myself." Jim was so elated that he picked Kevin up, ran out of the front door into a snow covered yard, and tussled joyously with him without even the warmth of a sweater for either of them. Then Lisa arrived. Jim had been there when they rolled her from delivery. He started to speak but the words were caught in his throat. Then he saw Lisa. . .the tiny little thing they had created. It was one of those moments one never forgets. She started to cry then was startled by the phone. . .

"Honey". . .she immediately knew it was Jim.

"Hi. . .How's it going there?" She knew this had to be easier for her than for him. She had faced all of this because she knew there was no alternative. . .no turning back. . .no looking ahead. But it was harder for him. . .he had to look forward.

"Fine", he spoke gently. . . "but we miss you. . .most of all, I miss you. Lisa and Kevin haven't been quiet a minute. She reminds me so much of you that it's almost as if you are here with me." She was too choked to speak. She was reminded of Emerson's "the only gift is a portion of thyself". This gave her security. She knew she had given of herself freely and abundantly and felt satisfaction in this knowledge. There had been a purpose in her life and she had fulfilled it without even being aware. "We'll be over before lunch," Jim spoke, "the doctor gave me permission to take you downstairs to the dining hall so we can all have Christmas dinner together. The kids will love being with you."

Her thoughts had carried her so far away that she hardly knew what Jim had said. "Sue. . . are you there. . .is anything wrong?"

"No, I'm fine. . .just feeling a little lonely. I'll be looking for you. . .drive carefully."

As she placed the phone back in place she knew it was time to come face to face with herself. Here she was. . .Sue Brandon, age 32, wife and mother, loving and carefree, accepting every good thing that had come her way with open arms and a belief in certainty. . .a certainty that there is goodness in the world and that love and faith endure. Here also lay Sue Brandon, a young patient diagnosed as having a terminal disease. She had constantly asked herself "why me". . . "why can't I accomplish more". . . "what is my purpose". Now she knew. . .she had accepted the certainty of life, the certainty of love, the certainty there being some plan for her life. . .and even the certainty of Christmas. Why could she not now accept the idea of the cer-

tainty of death, a certainty which had existed since the time of her birth. She began to feel somewhat calm and satisfied. She realized that acceptance of this certainty would liberate her from self-pity. She remembered so vividly the prayer "grant me the strength to change things that need changing, the courage to accept things that cannot be changed, and the wisdom to know the difference". She knew the difference. She had apparently fulfilled her purpose in this life. . .she had been a part of something wonderful and worldly. She would leave a part of herself behind in the fond memories of Jim and the children. She would also leave behind a child who was so in her likeness that Jim had expressed "it's almost as if you're here with me."

She took her brush and began to prepare herself for Jim and the children. She looked out the window. . .the rain had almost ended. She had been encouraged somewhat by the doctor's hope for a cure for her and Jim was determined that he and she hang on to this hope. And she would. . . but this Christmas Day had brought her closer to the realities of life and death and peace of mind about both. With this in mind she would face the days ahead. . .however many there should be.

Linda McKenzie

Lookout Life

It's bitter cold.
The wind moves chills through my mind.
There is a roundness to the sea,
And with each hour the circle becomes larger.
The sun peaks through the ceiling.
Warmth is kept away.
It's bitter cold.
The hours shorten.
The circle's size is decreasing.
Air is harder to find.
Contacts are closing,
My handkerchief died in a good cause.
The idiot makes an appearance.
The evening says hello.
It's bitter cold.
It's bitter cold.

Dreaming in Paranoia

Alone, enjoying, ignoring.
Enclosed, tightening, frightening.
Darkened, remorseful, resourceful.
Escaping, betrayed, delayed.
Free, vengeful, sinful.
Killing, impairing, uncaring.
Satisfied, diseased, appeased.
Happy.

Categorizing, Satirizing

Let them praise the Grecian Urn
when all the while their bodies yearn.
They long for a touch for a kiss, for love.
Is this not really what they're thinking of?
Such hypocrisy hides from those who could see!
If only their culture-fed minds could be
Just what they claim, but alas, dear friend,
they're players in a play that never shall end.

Michael Green

Spirit

To pass forward, living forever,
never to die or be severed.
Time, to wish by like autumn leaves,
yet, me, never to grow old or to leave.

I would become more than wise,
learn more than man can realize,
Live by all knowledge at last,
Obtain each and everything in the past.

Power would I command,
Let weaklings grovel at my demands.
Needing no one, nothing, or none,
My past, present, future is the Son.

But as you now perceive,
I speak not of this present body to leave.
The inner self, real man,
That's what I, Son, God demands.

Henry

A Thought

There is a certain aggressivity
About vulnerability
Forcing nakedness onto
The unwaring. . .unprepared. . .

Father's Day In Heaven

Why do we think of Dad, only on Father's Day?
or perhaps those last hours of his earthly stay?
Why don't we thank him now for all the things he's done?
And hear his kindly voice say, "Don't talk about it son."
His eyes crinkle at the corners as he thinks of long ago,
his hair is streaked with silver, and Oh, we love him so!
He thinks to himself, as Grandchildren run to and fro,
"Will I be quickly forgotten when it's time for me to go?"
He very seldom thinks of his material worth,
but what he has accomplished while visiting on this earth.
He knows that he was put here, with Heavenly plans for him,
and that he will return to Heaven, when he has accomplished them. . .
Years ago, a Father gave to us His Son.
It must have been much harder, as He was an only one. . .
We follow our Father to the graveside; we linger there and pray.
But seldom, do any realize, this must be our Heavenly Father's day!

Virgil Carico

If you desire to be with me,
then you and I
are kindred.
If you dream of togetherness
and a life of love,
and grassy meadows,
sandy shores,
moonlit nights,
sunny days,
quiet talks,
and rainy walks,
Then you and I,
my Love,
Must share a heart
beat
by
beat
'Til we've moulded
together
a love
of the rarest sort
and
breathed soft,
eternal air,
lovingly,
gently,
slowly,
forever,
together.

John D. Whitfield, Jr.

TIME AND THE MOUNTAIN

The Mountain was uneasy. The peace that God had spread over it like a mantle at the beginning of time had endured for uncounted ages. The span of Time had been so long that the Mountain had forgotten its own creation. Even the Sea had forgotten that it once covered the Mountain. The mountain had never known anything but peace. Now that peace was disturbed.

The Mountain had known life. It had watched through the long ages as a succession of various creatures came and went. The lizards and the dinosaurs went their way to be replaced by furry things that ran about. But lately, there had come a strange bifurcated creature that had no fur of his own. Instead, he stripped the fur off other creatures to cover his own body. This bifurcated creature used the remains of the other creatures for his food. Predators, the Mountain had seen, but nothing like this. The big cats with their long, curved teeth killed other animals for food, but this creature derived great pleasure from the act of killing. The greatest pleasure of all seemed to be that of killing each other. That one was the most dangerous of all life forms. If he went his way unchecked-----, The Mountain quaked at the very thought.

The quake was slight, but it was sufficient to shake loose a few boulders and send them crashing down the slope. One of them caused a bifurcated creature to scamper out of its path with such haste that he fell. As he rose, he lifted his club in one front paw and shook it at the Mountain. The red eyes under the low brow gleamed with dim intelligence and abysmal hatred.

The centuries sharpened the intelligence. The hatred remained, but the creature had learned to mask it. He tried to pretend that it did not exist because of a vague awareness within himself that it could lead to his own destruction. The Mountain watched as one came from beyond time to reveal the creature to himself.

"Come unto me," said this One, "And you will find peace and rest for your souls."

But the creatures could not bear to see himself as he was. He nailed this One to a cross of wood. Thus, having denied the Creator, he set about to learn the secrets of creation..

The Mountain watched as the creatures probed into the atom. Time and eternity waited as the atom yielded to their probing minds. In the glare of the light from the first mushroom-shaped cloud, the creature said, "Now we are gods, having within our hands the power of the universe." It may have been a trick of the light, but their faces glowed with the fires of the pit. Behind their eyes lay the shadow of fear. They were as creatures marked by demons as their own. It seemed that the whole world shook and trembled and there were earthquakes in many places.

The clouds of war lay thick over all the land. The sun was darkened by day and the moon was obscured by night. The poisonous dust had settled on the Mountain and on the Sea. No living thing could be seen for a thousand miles. Yet from huge caverns within the Mountain, creatures sent birds of war that flew without wings to strike other Mountains ten thousand miles away.

The Mountain was weary of war. It was weary of the creatures who had burrowed deep within it. It was weary of supplying the material for the endless stream of nuclear bombs carried by the rockets. It was weary of supporting the weight of the bombs stacked at different levels in the honeycomb structure of its own rock. If those levels collapsed, a hundred tons of fissionable material would be dumped into close proximity. The Mountain seemed to shake at the prospect, and a fissure opened in the rock near the summit. Of course it may have been caused by the rocket from the distant mountain striking at that point.

Deep inside the honeycomb of corridors, Mars Larson looked up from his viewing screen and said to his Chief, "That does it, sir. We have knocked out their last rocket site. That last one was a direct hit."

The Chief said with a sigh, "I am almost sorry it is over. They gave us a good show. Is there any sign of life?"

"None, Sir," said Mars. "As far as I can tell, we are the only ones left alive on this earth."

"Lord of the Earth," said the Chief. "I have dreamed of this day all my life."

The excited voice of Mars Larson cut in. "Rocket on target!", he shouted. "They got one off just before ours hit!"

The Mountain saw the rocket coming and shook itself. The fissure that had started near the the summit opened wide. Straight and true as an arrow, the rocket entered the fissure. It penetrated a thousand feet before it ever touched rock. There was a moment that seemed never to end. Then the solid rock of the Mountain glowed with an internal fire as it started to melt and collapse. The collapse never occurred. The top of the Mountain was caught as it fell and carried upward to form the greatest mushroom cloud that had ever appeared on earth. It would have made the Chief quite proud if he had seen it.

The Mountain is no more and only time continues. The Sun is no longer darkened by day and the moon shines at night. The Sea covers the pit where the Mountain was, but the glow of the radioactive fire can be seen through ten thousand feet of water. The breeze seems to whisper the dirge "and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

Lately, a few slimy creatures appear in the scum of the Sea. They live on lesser creatures which they swallow whole-----

Robert L. Carroll

One Warm and Fresh, Sweet Day

It was a day, that kind of day,
When the water was running fast.
Where it was from and where it was going,
was as in the ages past.
But the trees played on, and the clouds danced,
and it was all a coral of joy.

But all of a sudden, in a
cloud of thunder, a little one awoke
to see the sun.

It was a day, a different day,
because something had begun to
wonder.

So he and the sun and the river that day, set off to find their
pearly way.

He sailed on for aeons, or it could
have been a minute, But the tone
of glory had not struck him, he had
seen it all, and done it all,
and felt a lot besides.

But he hadn't seen what he thought
he'd see. And yet, in a way, he had inside

It was in a woman, a beautiful
woman, who intertwined herself above
him, and kissed him and caressed him,
and loved him and blessed him and
asked him what they should do.

So they sailed on, as one. Towards
the sun, as if life for them, had
just begun.

The river was quiet, for a long, long
time; and winded on and
on and on.

But as quick as she had come,
in the setting sun, like a sad, sad song,

In a shed of a tear, she was gone.

He was still on the river, the lonely
River, and he was crying a midnight tune.
He had not seen what he imagined he'd see, but
had tasted the stench of grief.

Could anybody, he thought, but God,
Himself, Share the mysteries in life; or
does it have to be our dreams that bring us down
in strife. Or would it be as through a half retarded
star light, or as on one warm and
fresh, sweet day, that the fire
light in my mind, would lead me
on that pearly way.

So he and the river went on, like
a sun fighter's song, in the gloom
of the day. He awoke from a dream, an endless dream,
to hear the chime of a bell, which rang from a
Sunday steeple. He sat awhile and thought
awhile of all the lonely people.
He knew they searched and hoped like he,
That some one would have the truth to tell,
of what in heaven or birth or even hell.

The sound faded away, like many a day;
and the river went down for years.

Then came that day, in a coal
black day, that the river ceased
to flow. The candle was dim; and
that gloomy light was all around his face.
He prayed to be sure, yet totally free,
and he knew he would find it
in eternity.

John Peters



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